

funding for Charter Schools and supported the Charter School Facilities Financing Demonstration Program during consideration of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that charter schools give parents options when determining the best public school in which to enroll their children. Thus, we must ensure that all our students reach their highest academic potential, which may require attending a charter school that provides a model better suited towards an individual student's needs.

H.R. 1350, IMPROVING EDUCATION RESULTS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2003

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1350, Improving Education Results for Children with Disabilities Act of 2003.

More than two decades ago, the federal government imposed special education mandates on states and local school districts. Ever since then, the federal government has struggled to fund those mandates.

Our nation's special needs children require a special commitment. And I'm pleased that this Congress has met that commitment with this IDEA renewal and reauthorization bill.

It is important to note that since 1996 when Republicans regained the majority of this body, overall federal IDEA funding to states and school districts has increased by 282.3%. From 1996 to 2003, IDEA spending has increased an average of 18.6% per year—that's more than double the average annual increases from 1988 to 1995 when Democrats held the majority.

This bill reauthorizes that renewed commitment that our party has brought to our nation's education policy. Not only is it Congress' responsibility to financially support the provision of special education by local school districts, it is our duty to ensure that no child is left behind in America's classrooms. Today, with this legislation we reaffirm this important priority.

In addition to renewing our continued commitment to special needs education funding, H.R. 1350 increases accountability and improves education results for children with disabilities by deemphasizing compliance with complicated rules, diverting that attention to delivering academic results. It ensures that parents of special needs children will receive report cards from schools showing academic progress indicators beginning in 2005, just as the No Child Left Behind reforms implemented such policies for mainstream students.

H.R. 1350 reduces the Individualized Education Plan, or IEP, paperwork burden on districts and special education teachers, lengthening the required IEP filing from every one to three years, though these provisions in the bill are options for BOTH states and parents. If parents opt for an annual IEP, this package continues to guarantee that right. By amending lengthy paperwork requirements, we ensure that teachers will spend more of their time on instructing students and less on filing government forms.

In addition, H.R. 1350 improves early intervention strategies to reduce overidentifying or even misidentifying students as those with special needs. This legislation will give flexibility to local districts to use a percentage of funds for pre-referral services.

Finally, this legislation supports general education and special education teachers by providing for appropriate professional development and encouraging innovative approaches to parental involvement and parental choice.

Mr. Chairman, local school districts throughout my congressional district in New York State face uncertain fiscal times this coming budget year and, quite possibly, well into the near future. Funding instructional services for students with special needs is an enormous burden these districts bear. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 1350 to more fully share in this responsibility.

REGULATORY CERTAINTY

HON. MARY BONO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mrs. BONO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on an issue of critical importance to our economy.

Throughout the broadband debate over the past two years, we have all heard from carriers of all shapes and sizes. They have very different business plans and different opinions on the way competition should proceed. The one common message from all of these disparate companies, however, is a strong and urgent call for regulatory certainty. Individual investors, Wall Street analysts and companies alike all demand it.

I fear that the recent FCC action on the Triennial Review threatens to exponentially increase regulatory uncertainty for the telecommunications sector. I fear lawsuits all across the country that will drag out resolution of these important issues for many years to come. Our world of digital packets of information traveling at the speed of light knows no geographic boundaries. However the resulting state-by-state patchwork of burdensome regulations threatens to pose yet another obstacle to getting reasonably priced broadband to our constituents.

The old adage is true, you can't make everyone happy, all of the time. But if we level the playing field and let the markets work, the smart people in these companies can at least develop business plans and investors can judge their strategy on the merits. These companies need some clear direction so they can plan their futures, adjust, adapt and deliver for their shareholders and consumers.

Just ten short years ago we watched as the telecommunications sector drove the greatest economic expansion in the history of the world. The American people that are suffering through this depressed economy demand leadership. We must provide certainty and stability to the telecommunications sector so that our markets can work and drive our economy to greatness once again.

IN HONOR OF THE U.S. CHAMPION MOORPARK HIGH SCHOOL DECATHLON TEAM

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Moorpark High School Academic Decathlon Team as the United States Academic Decathlon Champions.

This is the second time in five years that Moorpark High School's team has won this premiere scholastic contest. Prior to its win in 1999, no team from Ventura County, California, had even competed in the nationals.

Team members Lindsay Hebert, Nathaniel Jones, Adam Abed, Paul Ideal, Kevin Randolph, Ashlee Scott, Grant Volk, Tracy Yagi and Max Geiger are now recognized as the best and the brightest in the country. They are the pride of their school, their community and their country.

These youngsters won by literally dedicating their lives to the challenge. For nine months they put in up to 40 hours a week beyond their school days to study and hone their skills. They gave up weekends, vacations, part-time jobs and time with their families.

Their hard work paid off. Last weekend, Moorpark scored 51,423 points out of a possible 60,000 points to win the national title against 37 other teams from throughout the country. They brought home 15 gold, nine silver and seven bronze medals.

Their coach, Larry Jones, worked as hard, if not harder, than his students and is as deserving of high praise. Coach Jones has said he will retire from the team after 12 years of leading dozens of students to victory at the county, state and national level. He said the same thing after winning the 1999 championship, but this time he says he means it. At a minimum, he has earned some relaxation in the glow of a job well done—again. I know my colleagues will join me in wishing him the best in whatever his future brings.

Mr. Speaker, I also know my colleagues will join me in applauding nine outstanding students who achieved a very prestigious goal—Lindsay Hebert, Nathaniel Jones, Adam Abed, Paul Ideal, Kevin Randolph, Ashlee Scott, Grant Volk, Tracy Yagi and Max Geiger—the U.S. champion Moorpark High School Academic Decathlon Team.

VOTER PROTECTION ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Voter Protection Act. Unlike most so-called "campaign reform" proposals, the Voter Protection Act enhances fundamental liberties and expands the exchange of political ideas. The Voter Fairness Act accomplishes this goal by lowering and standardizing the requirements for, and the time required to get, signatures to qualify a Federal candidate for the ballot. Many states have unfair rules and regulations that make it virtually impossible for minor party and independent candidates to get on the ballot.

I want to make 4 points about this bill. First, it is constitutional. Article I, section 4, explicitly authorizes the U.S. Congress to, "At any time by law make or alter such regulations regarding the manner of holding elections." This is the authority that was used for the Voter Rights Act of 1965.

The second point I would like to make is an issue of fairness. Because so many states require independent candidates to collect an excessive amount of signatures in a short period of time, many individuals are excluded from the ballot. For instance, there has not been one minor party candidate on the Georgia ballot since 1943, because of Georgia's overly strict ballot access requirements. This is unfair. The Voter Protection Act corrects this.

My third point addresses those who worry about overcrowding on the ballot. In fact, there have been statistical studies made of states that have minimal signature requirements and generous grants of time to collect the signatures. Instead of overcrowding, these states have an average of 3.3 candidates per ballot.

The fourth point that I would like to make is that complying with ballot access rules drains resources from even those minor party candidates able to comply with these onerous rules. This obviously limits the ability of minor party candidates to communicate their message and ideas to the general public. Perhaps the ballot access laws are one reason why voter turnout has been declining over the past few decades. After all, almost 42 percent of eligible voters have either not registered to vote or registered as something other than Democrat or Republican.

The Voter Protection Act is a constitutional way to reform campaign laws to increase voter participation by making the election process fairer and open to new candidates and ideas. I hope all my colleagues will join me in supporting this true campaign reform bill.

CONTINUING SUPPORT OF U.S. ARMED FORCES

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces, who continue to act with honor, courage, valor, and respect. Operation Iraqi Freedom was fought with precision and ended decisively.

Through the sweat and blood of our troops a vicious dictator's regime has ended, the American people are safer, and an oppressed people have new hope for the future. These extraordinary men and women risked their lives for this noble cause, while many nations stood on the sidelines, once again proving that America is the symbol of liberty and freedom in the world.

I encourage Americans to continue their support of our troops and their families, even long after the war no longer headlines on our nightly news. I commend radio host Mike Gallagher for doing his part, in organizing a benefit concert, featuring the Marshall Tucker Band, for military families in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and I hope others follow his lead.

May Cod bless our troops and may Cod bless America.

IN RECOGNITION OF WORLD WAR I VETERAN AL ROSS

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, today I bring sad news of the passing of an American hero, Mr. Al Ross of Palm Beach County, Florida at the age of 101. Al Ross was one of the last remaining veterans of World War I.

Al was a living legend in Palm Beach County, who freely gave of his time to educate many generations of Americans on the true meaning of service to our nation and deep understanding of the Pledge of Allegiance. In countless schools and public appearances around the county, he was a fiery champion for all veterans and a defender of the flag. Up until the very last moment that continued to be his mission.

In 2002, fewer than 500 veterans of World War I remained and Al was the last known survivor in Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast. Still wearing his 1918 Navy uniform, I last saw him this past July 4th speaking to a Town of Palm Beach picnic celebrating America. As always, he had something new to share with his audience, and this month was looking forward to again being a featured speaker at this year's Memorial Day services at the National Cemetery.

We in Congress should remember Al Ross, along with his fellow soldiers and sailors from the Great War who are rapidly departing God's green earth which they ably defended with honor and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, Al Ross, small in stature, big in heart will be missed. He lived to see our military go from trench warfare to laser guided missiles, from Verdun to Baghdad. Yet as Al Ross would say, our flag was still there bringing freedom and hope to people around the world.

In Al's honor I close with his favorite, The Pledge of Allegiance, which he recited many hundreds of times and explained its meaning in his own colorful way.

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

Mr. Speaker, I salute Al Ross on behalf of a grateful nation.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF BRIG. GEN. AUSTIN SHOFNER

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the memory of a great American hero and warrior, Brig. Gen. Austin C. Shofner, who retired from the U.S. Marine Corps in 1959 to return back to his home of Shelbyville, Tennessee.

At the time of his death in 1999, Gen. Shofner was the state's most decorated vet-

eran, having survived the Bataan Death March during World War II. Not only did the tenacious Marine survive this harrowing experience, but he escaped his captors to report the atrocity to the rest of the world. Once he recovered from the starvation and severe beatings inflicted on him during his captivity, he was given command of a battalion that ferociously fought on the western Pacific shores of Peleliu, where he was badly wounded.

Refusing to be sidelined for long, Gen. Shofner recovered from his wounds and led another battalion of Marines that attacked the enemy on the island of Okinawa. He was only 28 years old at the end of World War II. Through the courageous actions of warriors like Gen. Shofner, the United States of America has persevered against its enemies. We are once again facing uncertain times and an unconventional enemy, so it is appropriate that we remember our nation's past heroes. Their deeds and acts of bravery are an inspiration to America's current breed of fighting men and women who go in harm's way to protect us and the interests of this great nation.

God bless the brave men and women who wear and have worn the uniforms of our Armed Forces. And God bless the sacrifices they have made and will continue to make to keep this country free. Brig. Gen. Austin Shofner made many sacrifices when his country depended on him the most. He is the epitome of courage and honor and will forever be remembered as a true hero.

INTRODUCTION OF THE RUNAWAY, HOMELESS, AND MISSING CHILDREN PROTECTION ACT

HON. PHIL GINGREY

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2003

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker Today I introduce the Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children Protection Act. This legislation contains the reauthorization of both the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the Missing Children's Assistance Act. This bill strengthens the programs and services authorized under these acts in order to better address the needs of the at-risk youth served.

The changes that were made to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act will allow for a larger percentage of the allocation to go toward Transitional Living Programs. This will help to meet the need that exists for these programs so older runaway and homeless youth can develop the skills and resources to promote their independence and prevent future dependency on social services. Additionally, youth who are participating in the Transitional Living Program who come to the end of their 18 month stay before they reach the age of 18 will now be able to receive an exception to stay in the Transitional Living Program until they are 18 years old. The bill clarifies that term "group homes" in the Transitional Living Program includes "maternity group homes." These group homes operate currently and have been successful at providing child development, family budgeting, health and nutrition, and other skills to promote the parent's long-term economic independence in order to ensure the well-being of the child. The Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children Protection